



clean
water
means
Better Health



WORLD HEALTH DAY

April 7, 1955



An experience related by a Food and Agriculture Organization mission points up the World Health Day theme for 1955,

“Clean Water Means Better Health.” An FAO mission was advising the Pakistan Government on a project to control and use the water of the Ganges for agriculture. One day the head of the mission bought some fish from a fisherman in the river’s delta—a man who lives on and from the water.

“For payment,” said the fisherman, “just give us some fresh water to drink. That and a little rice are what we need.”

Dr. M. G. Candau, Director-General of the World Health Organization, stated in his message:

“Abundant supplies of clean water have always been a necessary condition for the rise of the great civilizations of history, such as those nurtured in the valleys of the Nile, the Euphrates, the Indus, the Ganges, and the Yangtze. But as these civilizations flourished, their growing population only too often poisoned the water on which their life depended.

“Although spectacular results have been achieved within the last few decades in Western Europe and North America through the improvement of water supplies and the sanitary disposal of human wastes, no country in the world can yet afford to relax its vigilance.

“We must not forget that serious and widespread cholera and typhoid epidemics were still occurring in Europe and America at the end of the 19th century. As late as 1937, a momentary breakdown in the water purification system of Croydon, near Lon-

don, resulted in a terrible epidemic of typhoid fever.

“In the immediate years following World War II, 250,000 cases of typhoid fever with 25,000 deaths were occurring annually in Europe. In Mexico in 1948, an estimated 22 percent of all deaths were caused by waterborne diseases.

“Experts believe that in many Asian countries the sickness rate could be halved by protecting water supplies and providing proper facilities for the disposal of wastes.

“There is an added need for vigilance in areas where farming methods are being modernized, industries are expanding, and populations are becoming denser. Particularly careful planning is then needed to assure sufficient water supplies for homes, factories, irrigation, and electric power, and to solve the complementary problems of the disposal of sewage and industrial wastes.”

frontispiece . . .

Men of Loma de Ramas, a village of 400 inhabitants in El Salvador, transporting pipe for a water supply line. The river crossing was one leg of their trip from the supply depot at Guazapa to the village, over 5 miles of tortuous rock-strewn road and half-way up a mountain. To get fresh, drinkable water for the village, one phase of the WHO and El Salvador general health program, the men, women, and children of the village volunteered to carry the pipes and other equipment. (*United Nations photograph.*)

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